

which expresses the habitual tenour of a man's active being. The character *may* be displayed in the successive unconnected undertakings, which are each of limited extent, and end with the attainment of their particular objects. But it is seen in its most commanding aspect in those grand schemes of action, which have no necessary point of conclusion, which continue on through successive years, and extend even to that dark period, when the agent himself is withdrawn from human sight.

I have repeatedly, in conversation, remarked to you the effect of what has been called a Ruling Passion. When its object is noble, and an enlightened understanding regulates its movements, it appears to me a great felicity; but whether its object be noble or not, it infallibly creates, where it exists in great force, that active ardent constancy, which I describe as a capital feature of the decisive character. The Subject of such a commanding passion wonders, if indeed he were at leisure to wonder, at the persons who pretend to attach importance to an object which they make none but the most languid efforts to secure. The utmost powers of the man are constrained into the service of the favourite Cause by this passion, which sweeps away, as it advances, all the trivial objections and little opposing motives, and seems almost to open a way through impossibilities. This spirit comes on him in the morning as soon as he recovers his consciousness, and commands and impels him through the day, with a power from which he could not emancipate himself if he would. When the force of habit is added, the determination becomes invincible, and seems to assume rank with the great laws of nature, making it nearly as certain that such a man will persist in his course as that in the morning the sun will rise.

A persisting untamable efficacy of soul gives a seductive and pernicious dignity even to a character which every moral principle forbids us to approve. Often in the narrations of history and fiction, an agent of the most dreadful designs compels a sentiment of deep respect for the unconquerable mind displayed in their execution. While we shudder at his activity, we say with regret, mingled with an admiration which borders on partiality, What a noble being this would have been, if goodness had been his destiny ! The partiality is evinced in the very selection of terms by which we show